

## Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

UNCLAS STATE 079069

FOL NEW DELHI 4287 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO BOMBAY CALCUTTA  
MADRAS MAR 17, 1978 REPEATED GTO YOU QUOTE

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 4287

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TECH IN US

SUBJECT: PRESS COMMENT ON INDO-US NUCLEAR RELATIONS

THE MARCH 17 "TIMES OF INDIA" CARRIED THE FOLLOWING  
EDITORIAL ENTITLED "STRAIGHT TALK".

BEGIN QUOTE. THE UNION GOVERNMENT HAS DONE WELL TO  
SERVE NOTICE THAT IT WILL CLAIM ABSOLUTE TITLE TO THE  
SPENT FUEL FROM THE TARAPUR ATOMIC POWER PLANT IF THE  
US AT ANY STAGE REPUDIATES ITS AGREEMENT TO SUPPLY  
ENRICHED URANIUM DURING THE LIFETIME OF THE STATION.  
THIS WILL PAVE THE WAY FOR TAKING TARAPUR OUT OF THE  
SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM ALTOGETHER. NEW DELHI WAS FULLY  
ENTITLED TO TAKE SIMILAR ACTION IN REGARD TO THE  
RAJASTHAN ATOMIC PLANT WHEN CANADA IN THE SUMMER OF  
1974 UNILATERALLY STOPPED SHIPMENTS OF EQUIPMENT  
AND HEAVY WATER FOR ITS SECOND UNIT FOLLOWING THE PEACEFUL  
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EXPLOSION AT POKHRAN. BUT AS A RESPONSIBLE POWER  
DEDICATED TO THE CONTROLLED USE OF ATOMIC ENERGY FOR  
PEACEFUL PURPOSES, INDIA THEN STAYED ITS HAND. FOR  
THE LAST 18 MONTHS OR SO IT HAS STOICALLY BORNE  
EXCRUCIATING DELAYS AND UNCERTAINTIES IN THE INFLOW  
OF ENRICHED URANIUM SUPPLIES FROM THE US. BUT  
SOONER OR LATER, ITU PATIENCE IS BOUND TO GET EXHAUSTED.

ALREADY THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY HAS HAD TO CUT THE PRODUCTION OF POWER FROM TARAPUR DUE NOT SO MUCH TO THE PAUCITY OF FUEL AS TO THE LACK OF SUFFICIENT STORAGE FOR DUMPING THE IRRADIATED RODS. UNDER ITS ACCORD, THE US HAS INTER ALIA THE OPTION TO BUY BACK THE SPENT FUEL FROM INDIA OR LET THIS COUNTRY REPROCESS IT UNDER SAFEGUARDS. DESPITE PROLONGED NEGOTIATIONS, THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS VIRTUALLY RULED OUT EITHER COURSE. THE US HAD EARLIER AGREED TO INDIA BUILDING A FAIRLY EXPENSIVE FACILITY AT TARAPUR FOR REPROCESSING. THANKS TO THE DRASTIC CHANGE IN AMERICAN NUCLEAR POLICY BROUGHT ABOUT BY PRESIDENT CARTER, INDIA CANNOT FULLY USE ITS REPROCESSING PLANT AT TARAPUR IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. TRUE, WASHINGTON HAS GIVEN TO THE DAE FREE OF CHARGE DESIGNS AND DRAWINGS FOR THE MODIFICATION OF ITS STORAGE DUMPS FOR SPENT FUEL AT TARAPUR SO AS TO INCREASE THEIR CAPACITY. APART FROM BEING ONLY A TEMPORARY PALLIATIVE, HOWEVER, SUCH CHANGES WILL COST A LOT OF MONEY AND IT IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN THAT THEY CAN BE CARRIED OUT IN GOOD TIME.

IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. MORARJI DESAI, WILL BE ABLE TO PERSUADE WASHINGTON TO FULFILL ITS CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS TO INDIA DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO THE USA., IF NOT EARLIER. THE UNCLASSIFIED

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USA HAS SUPPLIED TARAPUR-TYPE PLANTS TO SEVERAL COUNTRIES SOME OF WHICH, LIKE INDIA, ARE STILL STEADFAST IN THEIR VIEW THAT THEY CANNOT POSSIBLY ACCEPT FULLSCOPE SAFEGUARDS SO LONG AS THE PROPOSALS MOOTED IN THIS REGARD REMAIN BRAZENLY DISCRIMINATORY IN FAVOR OF THE NUCLEAR-WEAPON STATES. WHAT IS MORE, RESISTANCE TO THE NEW US STANCE ON REPROCESSING IS MOUNTING EVEN AMONG AMERICA'S OWN ALLIES IN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT PRESIDENT CARTER MAY NOW SEE THE WRITING ON THE WALL AND CHANGE COURSE. IN ANY CASE, INDIA CANNOT WRITE OFF ITS HEAVY INVESTMENTS IN ATOMIC REACTORS AND THE REPROCESSING PLANT AT TARAPUR BY SWITCHING OVER TO COAL, AS SOME SUGGEST, TO RUN THE TURBINES AND THE GENERATORS INSTALLED THERE. IT WILL NO DOUBT BE DIFFICULT FOR THE DAE TO DEVELOP A MIXED PLUTONIUM-NATURAL URANIUM FUEL FOR THE REACTORS OR ENRICH URANIUM FOR THE PURPOSE ON ITS OWN. BUT WHATEVER THE ODDS, BOTH THESE ALTERNATIVES SHOULD BE VIGOROUSLY EXPLORED. END QUOTE. GOHEEN UNQUOTE VANCE

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